



MICHAEL SMITH FOUNDATION
FOR HEALTH RESEARCH

BC's health research funding agency

MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund - Funding Call #1

GUIDELINES

ROLLING CALL: DEADLINE FOR FINAL SUBMISSIONS
MAY 19, 2020, 4:30 P.M. PT

1. Purpose

The Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR), funded by the Province of British Columbia, is BC's health research funding agency. MSFHR helps develop, retain and recruit the talented people whose research improves the health of British Columbians, addresses health system priorities, creates jobs and adds to the knowledge economy. Learn more at www.msfhr.org.

MSFHR is working to support British Columbia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic through two main streams of work: 1) funding needed research, and 2) providing secretariat support for a provincial strategic research advisory committee that reports to the Provincial response Planning Section Chief, Health Emergency Coordination Centre, and will advise the Province on what research needs to be done to support the Province's response to the pandemic.

MSFHR is now launching the first of several funding calls for BC researchers. The focus of this first call will be on high quality research that evaluates BC's response to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and informs ongoing response, especially strategies for avoiding or mitigating subsequent waves of transmission. Future calls will address other research gaps.

2. Background

The novel coronavirus COVID-19 emerged in China in late 2019. Since then it has spread globally and was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization in January 2020. On March 17, 2020, British Columbia's Provincial Health Officer declared a provincial public health emergency under the Public Health Act related to the COVID-19 virus and its impact on British Columbians. The declaration of a public health emergency allows for real-time information to be collected, reported and analyzed across the health system, to identify immediate research needs and evidence.

To further an understanding about what research is being done and what is needed, the BC Ministry of Health has asked the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research (MSFHR) to support the following two strategic activities that will help inform the Provincial response to the pandemic:

1. The ***BC COVID-19 Strategic Research Advisory Committee*** - reporting to the provincial response Planning Section Chief of the Health Emergency Coordination Centre - provides information/advice that helps create a fuller picture as to what is being researched in BC related to COVID-19, and what is needed. The committee will ultimately create a provincial COVID-19 research framework that can be adapted ongoing. In addition to other activities, the committee supports MSFHR in how it allocates its COVID-19 Research Response Fund.

MSFHR will serve as secretariat for the committee.

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2. The **MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund** - the Province of BC has provided \$2M to MSFHR to support research that will inform BC's response to COVID-19 through a dedicated research fund. The fund will be allocated strategically in the context of BC's research and research infrastructure needs and gaps, and will be deployed through targeted calls and other mechanisms.

3. Research Fund Overview

This funding call will operate on a rolling intake basis, with applications reviewed as they are received through to May 19th; successful applicants will be notified as they are determined and no later than mid-June 2020. As an adaptive funding call, it will be monitored on an ongoing basis; the end date may change depending on demand and nature of applications.

The first call of the **MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund** has been developed in the context of the current setting of a large number of rapidly deployed, global and national research funds covering the full array of pandemic research.

This first call will focus on high quality research that evaluates BC's response to the first wave of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and informs ongoing response, especially strategies for avoiding or mitigating subsequent waves of transmission.

Applications to this call should address one or more of the following:

- Rapid evaluation/and or modelling of public health countermeasures to support the timing of levels of their withdrawal and potential future redeployments in BC;
- BC population-specific epidemiologic support for decision-makers, including the identification of strategies to prevent high burdens of illness among key/vulnerable groups (e.g. residents of long-term care facilities, inner city populations, Indigenous people, health care workers, etc.);
- Human geographic considerations in BC, including rurality, community, culture and population movement with a view to preventing transmission and mitigating effects;
- The identification and mitigation of the impacts of the pandemic and pandemic response, including the secondary effects on the health of the population of BC;
- The impacts of rapid health service redesign and redeployment on health outcomes in BC.

Successful applications will build on BC-specific capacities and strengths, draw on available expertise and resources and include cross-institution collaborations where appropriate. **Projects should have results available in time to help inform public health responses through the fall and winter of 2020/2021.**

Update April 24: MSFHR has joined research funders from around the world in signing Wellcome Trust's open science commitment for research data and findings relevant to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. All award recipients will have comply with the conditions outlined on the [Wellcome Trust website](#).

4. Award Amount and Duration

The MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund – Funding Call #1 will provide award amounts of up to **\$150,000**, for a maximum duration of **12 months**. Extraordinary requests above \$150,000 will be considered but will require additional justification to exceed the limit. Requirements for eligible expenses can be found in **Appendix A**.

5. Eligibility Requirements

For an application to be eligible for review:

- The proposed work must address one or more of the five areas noted in section [3. Research Fund Overview](#).
- The researcher must be based in BC and affiliated with an eligible BC host institution that has a signed memorandum of understanding with MSFHR to administer award funds. (For a list of current eligible institutions, see www.msfhr.org/sites/default/files/MOU_List.pdf). The researcher must be able to apply for and hold operating funds as a principal investigator.

Activities starting or taking place before the funding start date are not eligible for funding through this call. MSFHR reserves the right to declare applications ineligible.

6. Additional Contributions

MSFHR encourages applicants, when appropriate, to engage other organizations and stakeholders in:

- Contributing to the co-development of the proposed research programs, projects, and/or activities; and/or
- Enhancing the availability of funding for the proposed co-development of research programs, projects, and/or activities through additional cash or in-kind¹ support. Any additional in-kind or cash support should be indicated in the budget section of the application, and appropriately captured in a signed letter of support outlining the nature and amount of the contribution.

7. Additional Resources

Patient and public engagement offers a unique and valuable perspective to high-quality health research conducted in BC. The British Columbia Academic Health Science Network (BC AHSN), through the BC SUPPORT Unit, is partnering with MSFHR to support researchers to explore opportunities to

¹ Cash-equivalent goods or services that represent an incremental expense that the partner would not normally incur, and which would have to be purchased by award funds if not donated. This can include research and technical staff, providing direction and direct participation in the project, or the provision of access to specialized and/or proprietary equipment, tools or technology.

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engage with patients, families, members of the public or community partners in projects funded by this funding opportunity. If you have any questions about what patient and public engagement might look like in your research proposal, please contact Lynne Feehan at lfeehan@bcsupportunit.ca.

Projects that require the use of health data, such as results of COVID-19 testing, hospitalizations, physician service use, prescriptions medicines, demographics, social data, etc. will be supported by Population Data BC through a partnership with MSFHR. Individual projects should outline data requirements, but do not need to include a data-related budget in their project. These requests will be expedited. If you would like additional information, please contact Dr. Kim McGrail at kim.mcgrail@ubc.ca.

8. Partnerships

MSFHR welcomes inquiries from organizations interested in funding partnerships and collaborations that could leverage the MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund – Funding Call #1. Interested organizations should contact **Muneerah Kassam**, Manager, Partnerships, at 604.714.5371 or mkassam@msfhr.org.

9. Review Process

This funding call will operate on a rolling intake basis, with applications reviewed as they are received through to May 19th; successful applicants will be notified as they are determined and no later than mid-June 2020. Three cycles of peer review are currently planned during this funding call period.

All MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund applications will undergo a rapid peer review process that incorporates six principles of peer review: **integrity, accountability, transparency, balance, confidentiality** and **impartiality**. For further details, please visit <http://www.msfhr.org/funding/review-process>.

The information presented in the **Evaluation Criteria** and **Rating Scale** sections below will be used for the review process. All applications will be assessed against criteria in the following categories: 1) quality of the team, 2) science and timeliness of the proposed work, and 3) potential impact of the work to the BC context.

The overall score for an application will be obtained from all the categories and converted to the five point scale discussed in Section 9.2. To be **considered** for funding, an application must receive a minimum score of **3.5**.

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9.1 Evaluation Criteria Categories

Applications will be assessed against the criteria below:

Criterion
Quality of the team
Quality of the science and the timeliness
Potential impact

A full description of the evaluation criteria can be found on our website.

9.2 Rating Scale

Descriptor	Range
Outstanding	4.5 – 4.9
Excellent	4.0 – 4.4
Very good	3.5 – 3.9
Fair	3.0 – 3.4
Less than adequate	0 – 2.9

9.3 Funding Decision

Successful applicants will be notified as they are determined and no later than mid-June 2020. There is no appeal process. Applicants will receive notification of the funding decisions, as well as the reviewers' comments. A list of successful applicants will be published on MSFHR's website.

10. Award Start Date

Funding for MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund – Funding Call #1 will begin within seven business days of notification of a successful funding decision.

Successful applicants must confirm their acceptance of the award within the stipulated time indicated in the award notification package. Deferral of the award is not permitted.

11. Reporting Requirements

A progress report is required 8 weeks after commencement of funding, outlining progress in achieving the project's objectives.

A final report is required **30 days** after the award end date. A financial statement of expenditures, signed by the primary applicant and an authorized financial officer of the host institution, is required within **three months** following the award end date. Any unexpended funds must be returned to MSFHR. MSFHR will provide reporting information and/or materials for these purposes.

The final report may include the following:

- Details on the main activities that were supported by the award.
- Activity-specific outcomes such as policy change, post-activity working paper, media release, workshop materials, etc.
- Description of any expected or realized benefits to the BC health system and/or the health of British Columbians as a result of activities funded by the award.
- Description of how results helped inform public health responses to COVID-19.

MSFHR reserves the right to contact award recipients after the award end date to determine the short and middle-term outcomes and/or impacts of the MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund – Funding Call #1 award.

Additionally, to inform evaluation and continued improvement of our funding programs, award recipients will be invited to provide feedback to MSFHR staff to determine areas of improvement for this funding opportunity.

12. Key Competition Dates

Action	Target Date
Competition launch	April 6, 2020
Applications accepted until	May 19, 2020, 4:30 pm PT
Anticipated notice of funding decision	Successful applicants will be notified as they are determined and no later than mid-June 2020.
Anticipated start of funding	Within seven business days of notification of a successful funding decision

13. How to Apply

The application process for the MSFHR COVID-19 Research Response Fund – Funding Call #1 is comprised of an online application: **Final deadline date for submissions: May 19, 2020, 4:30 p.m. PT**

To complete your application, sign-in or create an [MSFHR ApplyNet](#) account and follow the instructions in the online application form. Additional information on how to use the MSFHR ApplyNet online platform can be found [here](#).

Please ensure that applications are complete and submitted by the MSFHR application deadline. Incomplete or late applications cannot be considered.

Note: The primary applicant, i.e., the one who initiates and submits the full application, is designated as the researcher.

13.1 Submission Requirements

- All steps of the application must be submitted using [MSFHR ApplyNet](#), the Foundation's online application submission system.
- All documents uploaded onto [MSFHR ApplyNet](#) must be in .pdf format. No other formats will be accepted.
- As an applicant, you will be able to access a .pdf copy of the application to review the information you have entered.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to review the .pdf copy of the application prior to submission to ensure that all data entered are complete and accurate. Once an application is submitted, it cannot be modified in any way.

All applicants applying for the first time to MSFHR will be required to register on [MSFHR ApplyNet](#) and create a system account email and password.

14. Contact Information

For questions regarding the application and submission process, please contact:

Valerie To

Director, Research Competitions

vto@msfhr.org

Kate Wilczak

Manager, Research Competitions

kate.wilczak@msfhr.org

For more information about the MSFHR ApplyNet system or help with login information, please contact:

MSFHR Help Desk

604.714.6609

helpdesk@msfhr.org

Appendix A – Eligible Expenses

To ease administrative burden, MSFHR is utilizing Tri-Council Guidelines as to the definition of [eligible expenses](#) with the exception of travel, which is ineligible. Applicants must provide justification for the amount of funds being requested, including a breakdown of estimated costs for eligible expenses, within the budget section of the on-line application. Eligible costs must be incurred within the funding period. MSFHR will not support any expenses incurred prior to, or after completion of, the funding period. The majority of expenses must be incurred within BC.